

deepening involvement of Iranian military personnel in Syria's brutal crackdown against anti-Assad demonstrators. There was no response on Friday to requests for comment left with the Syrian Embassy and Iranian interests section in Washington.

In the account provided by the diplomat and the U.S. officials, the Iranian military trainers were being brought to Damascus to instruct Syrians in techniques Iran used against the nation's "Green Movement" in 2009, the diplomat said. The Iranians were brutally effective in crushing those protests.

Officers from Iran's notorious Quds Force have played a key role in Syria's crackdown since at least mid-April, said the U.S. and allied officials. They said U.S. sanctions imposed against the Quds Force in April were implicitly intended as a warning to Iran to halt the practice.

The Quds Force is a unit of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps responsible for operations outside the country. It has helped fund and train Hezbollah and Hamas militants and supported anti-U.S. insurgents inside Iraq.

While the size of the Iranian contingent in Syria is not known, the numbers of advisers has grown steadily in recent weeks despite U.S. warnings, according to the U.S. and allied officials.

The Obama administration mentioned the role of the Quds Forces in announcing two sets of sanctions imposed against Syrian government officials in the past month. A White House executive order last week that targeted Assad and six other top government officials also included a little-noticed reference to Mohsen Chizari, an Iranian military officer who is the No. 3 leader in the Quds Force in charge of training.

The naming of Chizari—who in 2006 was arrested but later released by U.S. forces in Iraq for allegedly supplying arms to insurgents there—suggests that officials possess evidence of his role in assisting Syria's crackdown on protesters, said Michael Singh, a former senior director for Middle East affairs for the National Security Council during George W. Bush's administration.

"There's a deeply integrated relationship here that involves not only support for terrorism but a whole gamut of activities to ensure Assad's survival," Singh said.

It is not unusual for governments to draw on foreign assistance during times of unrest, as Western-allied governments in Bahrain and Egypt did when protests were building in those countries.

Iran's increasing engagement in the Syrian crackdown reflects anxiety in Tehran about the prospects for Assad, who has failed to end the protests despite rising brutality that human rights groups say has left more than 800 people dead and perhaps 10,000 in prison. While managing to hold on to power, Assad has been severely weakened after months of Syrian unrest, according to current and former U.S. officials and Middle East experts.

"Iran is focused intently on how things are evolving in Syria," said Mona Yacoubian, a former Middle East expert with the State Department's intelligence division and who is a special adviser to the U.S. Institute of Peace. "The two countries have a long-standing alliance of 30 years-plus. Syria is Iran's most important inroad into the Arab world, and its perch on the front line with Israel."

Assad, whose army is stretched across dozens of cities in an unprecedented domestic deployment, increasingly needs help to survive, Yacoubian said. And Iran desperately needs Assad. "If they lose the Syrian regime, it would constitute a huge setback," Yacoubian said.

Iran, a longtime supplier of military aid to Syria, has been helping Damascus battle

the current wave of civil unrest since at least mid-March, said the U.S. and allied officials. The emergence of Syria's first true mass protests—with tens of thousands of demonstrators pouring into the streets demanding Assad's ouster—initially flummoxed the country's security leaders, who had little experience with such phenomena.

On March 23, Turkish officials seized light weapons—including assault rifles and grenade launchers—on an Iranian cargo plane bound for Syria. Whether the shipment was intended to help suppress the uprising is unclear, but around the same time, Syria received other Iranian shipments that included riot control gear and computer equipment for Internet surveillance, the U.S. and allied sources said.

Just before the shipments, Assad announced with great fanfare that he was lifting the country's ban on the use of social media such as Facebook and YouTube. While widely hailed at the time, the move gave Assad's security police an Iranian-inspired tool for tracking down leaders of the protest movement, said Andrew Tabler, a former Syria-based journalist who is a Syria expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"Lifting the ban on Facebook helped the regime pinpoint where the [activists] were coming from," Tabler said in an phone interview from Lebanon, where he remains in contact with opposition figures. "It was not about being magnanimous; it was a way to allow more surveillance, leading to thousands of arrests."

HONORING THE BOYES HOT SPRINGS POST OFFICE

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 15, 2011

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleague, Representative LYNN WOOLSEY, to honor the 100th birthday of an important community institution, the Boyes Hot Springs Post Office. On July 8, 1911, the Sonoma Index Tribune reported that "A.D. Graham of Graham's Cash Store received the appointment as post master of Boyes Springs. Located at his store."

The store, lost in a 1923 fire along with most of the town, was near the train depot at Boyes Boulevard and the Sonoma Highway (Hwy 12). After rapid rebuilding, the post office was located in the Woodleaf Store (now a diner that is part of the Sonoma Mission Inn) until 1951, when its current site was built at the Plaza Center at Boyes Boulevard and Sonoma Highway.

This site, previously known as the Boyes Springs Plaza, had been the scene of street parties and fiestas. Now, redevelopment plans include a public plaza in the surrounding space, reviving it as a place for celebration.

Boyes Hot Springs has a lively history, integral to the fabric of the Sonoma Valley. Formerly the center of a great resort area, it hosted thousands of visitors during its heyday. There were dozens of resorts, from small motor courts to the grand Sonoma Mission Inn. The Boyes Bath House boasted the second largest indoor swimming pool in the country. And, for many years, the area was a training ground for professional football and baseball teams such as the Cleveland Browns and the San Francisco Seals.

After the demise of the passenger railroad, the area still thrived with the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge and the rise of the automobile. Boyes Springs real estate man L.E. "Bud" Castner was one of the first directors of the Golden Gate Bridge District.

In the 1960s, as the resorts faded, Boyes Hot Springs faded a bit as well. Community pride, however, never waned. The area became attractive in the 1980s and 1990s to home buyers who were priced out of the Bay area market. Attracted by its rural charm, they purchased its large stock of charming cottages to rehabilitate. At the same time, the population of Mexican immigrants grew, attracted principally by the grape growing and wine businesses.

To old timers and new residents alike, the post office is the center of the community. Since most of the surrounding streets receive no mail delivery, residents make a daily trip to the post office where they catch up on the latest local news with their friends and neighbors. The immigrant population relies on it for communication with their families back home. The postal workers are personally known to all, a part of the broader community family.

Mr. Speaker, the community is hosting a celebration to honor this anniversary. In the words of one of the organizers, Michael Acker of the Springs Community All, it will "salute the past, show appreciation for service, and look to the future with hope." Please join us in honoring the centennial of the Boyes Hot Springs Post Office.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2012

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 14, 2011

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2112) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes:

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of fully funding the CFTC.

According to Gene Guilford, Executive Director of the Independent Connecticut Petroleum Association, and former Reagan Energy Department Presidential appointee, gas prices should be \$2.50. He goes on to say that 15 to 20 percent of the price of a barrel of oil is due to pure speculation.

Even big oil executives agree, Exxon Mobil CEO and President Rex Tillerson recently testified that the price of a barrel of oil without speculation should be between \$60 and \$70. According to an April 2011 analysis by Goldman Sachs, unregulated speculation adds over \$20 per barrel to the price of oil.

In my home state of Connecticut, 4 million gallons of gas are sold a day. That means every day my constituents are spending an extra \$6 million for speculation. In this fragile